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IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend Claims 15-17, 22, 23 and 25 as follows.

--Claims 13-14 (Cancelled).

15. (Twice Amended) [The] An alkali-metal containing niobate-based piezoelectric sintering material composition [according to claim 13, wherein said] comprising a solid solution [is] represented by a composition formula $Li_x(K_{1-y}Na_y)_{1-x}(Nb_{1-z}Ta_z)O_3$, wherein $x = 0.001$ to 0.2 , $y = 0$ to 0.8 , $z = 0$ to 0.4 , and at least one additive selected from the group consisting of Cu, Li and Ta.

16. (Amended) [The] An alkali metal-containing niobate-based piezoelectric sintering material composition [according to claim 14, wherein said at least one additive is] comprising a solid solution represented by a composition formula $K_{1-x}Na_xNbO_3$, wherein $x = 0$ to 0.8 , and Cu as an additive present in an amount of 0.001 to 5 mol%.

17. (Amended) The alkali metal-containing niobate-based piezoelectric sintering material composition according to claim 15, wherein said at least one additive is Cu, Li and Ta, each of them present as an oxide form in an amount of not more than 5 mol%.

Claims 19-21 (Cancelled)

22. (Amended) [The method according to claim 19] A method for producing an alkali metal-containing niobate-based piezoelectric sintering material composition, comprising:

adding an additive powder containing at least one element selected from the group consisting of Cu, Li and Ta to a powder of niobate represented by formula $ANbO_3$, wherein A is an alkali metal, then blending these powders together;

molding said blended powders and sintering the same, wherein said additive powder is 0.001 to 5 mol% of Cu, and [said] the blended powder of a niobate is $K_{1-x}Na_xNbO_3$, wherein $x = 0$ to 0.8.

23. (Amended) [The method according to claim 19] A method for producing an alkali metal-containing niobate-based piezoelectric sintering material composition, comprising:

adding an additive powder containing at least one element selected from the group consisting of Cu, Li and Ta to a powder of niobate represented by formula $ANbO_3$, wherein A is an alkali metal, then blending these powders together;

molding said blended powders and sintering the same, wherein [said] the blended powder of a niobate is $Li_x(K_{1-y}Na_y)_{1-x}(Nb_{1-z}Ta_z)O_3$, wherein $x = 0.001$ to 0.2, $y = 0$ to 0.8, $z = 0$ to 0.4.

25. (Amended) A method for producing an alkali metal-containing niobate-based piezoelectric sintering material composition, comprising:

adding an additive powder containing at least one element selected from the group consisting of Cu, Li, and Ta to a mixture of a powder of precursor compounds for the niobate represented by the formula $ANbO_3$, wherein A is an alkali metal, then blending these powders together;

molding said blended powders and sintering the same; and giving piezoelectricity to the resulting sintered-substance in a process of a treatment, wherein said blended powder of a niobate is $K_{1-x}Na_xNbO_3$, wherein $x = 0$ to 0.8.

Claims 26-29 (Cancelled)

Claim 30 (New).--